

Chapter 281: Alone Time With Him (5)

When she fell asleep, she did not look unapproachable or dignified. Because of what happened today, her face was a little pale. Wrapped in the fox fur coat Xie Jingxing gave her, she really looked like a little girl who had not grown up yet. Her hair had already been dried by the furnace, and a lock of long hair covered her eyes. Perhaps tickled by it, Shen Miao frowned in her sleep.

Xie Jing walked to her side and paused for a moment. He reached out to tuck a lock of her long hair behind her ear and took out the jade hairpin from his sleeve. He played with it and gently put it back into Shen Miao's hair. He crossed his arms and looked at Shen Miao for a while. Seeing that she was sleeping soundly, he raised his eyebrows and said, "You're really bald. How can you fall asleep, knowing that you are with a strange man."

After a while, the boat suddenly stopped at the dock.

Xie Jing walked to the bow of the ship, and a few figures in black appeared from the dock. The one in lead said, "Master, it's all settled. Are you going back to the mansion now?"

Xie Jingxing looked back at the cabin and said, "Go to the princess mansion first. Tie Yi, bring a carriage over." He turned around and walked into the cabin. He knocked on the table. Shen Miao looked up sleepily. Xie Jingxing said, "We're at the dock."

"Already?" Shen Miao immediately came back to her senses. She glanced out of the window and was about to walk out. However, the wound on her leg had not healed yet. As soon as she stood up, her legs went weak and she almost fell. Xie Jingxing grabbed her arm and thought for a moment before reaching out to wrap the fox fur coat around Shen Miao. He then picked her up and walked out of the ship.

Shen Miao was shocked and subconsciously reached out to hug Xie Jingxing's neck. She looked up and saw Xie Jingxing smiling and saying, "Behave yourself. Don't take advantage of me."

Shen Miao was speechless. Xie Jingxing wrapped his arm around her shoulder. He was tall and well-built, so it was effortless for him to carry Shen Miao. Shen Miao leaned her head in his arms. She could feel his firm chest and steady heartbeat, and she actually felt a little shy.

When they left the boat, she realized that there was already a group of men in black standing outside. When they saw Xie Jingxing carrying a little girl out, although they tried their best to hold it in, their expressions still changed drastically. On the other hand, Xie Jingxing looked like it was only natural for him to carry her. He walked to the carriage and threw Shen Miao into it, saying to his subordinate, "To the princess mansion."

The carriage went away, leaving the men in black looking at each other. A young and tall man said, "Tie Yi, why is Master carrying a girl out? What's the relationship between that girl and Master?"

"That's right, that's right." Another woman walked over and rubbed her chin. "Over the years, countless beauties wanted to get close to Master, but they couldn't even touch him. It turns out that Master is into this kind of girl." Her eyes lit up. "Ha, no wonder."

“Who said that?” Another charming and mature woman said unhappily, “What’s there to like about that kind of little girl?”

“Huo Long, I know you like Master, but being jealous isn’t going to help.” The woman from before smiled and looked at the middle-aged man in the middle. “Tie Yi, you’re the closest to Master. Who’s that little girl? Tell us.”

“Shut up!” Tie Yi, who was standing in the middle, couldn’t take it anymore and said, “Go back! Do you all have nothing to do? If so, go and guard the tower jail tomorrow!”

As soon as he said that, everyone immediately retreated and said, “I suddenly remembered that there’s something else.” “Tonight was really dangerous.” “Did we get rid of all the corpses?” As they chatted, they walked away.

Tie Yi heaved a sigh of relief and turned to disappear into the night.

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On the other side, in the princess mansion, when the people outside reported that Xie Jingxing was here, Princess Rong Xin was already preparing to sleep.

She had been alone for many years and had no children by her side. Every time it was a festival, she would feel more lonely. Even if Emperor Wen Hui in the palace was her brother, they were not from the same mother after all. How could they be really close? Moreover, getting along with the emperor was never as comfortable as staying in the princess mansion. Therefore, during the Jade Rabbit Festival over the past years, Princess Rong Xin would neither enter the palace nor go out to have fun. Instead, she would lock herself up at home.

Today was different. When she found out that Xie Jingxing was here, Princess Rong Xin was a little surprised. After changing, she went out to welcome him. When she walked into the hall, she saw that Xie Jingxing was already sitting on a chair and waiting. When he saw her, he smiled. “Auntie Rong.”

Princess Rong Xin was close to Princess Yuqing. It was not inappropriate for Xie Jingxing to call her Auntie Rong.

“Why brought you here today?” When Princess Rong Xin saw Xie Jingxing, she was a little puzzled, but at the same time, she was very happy. She had no children of her own and had long treated Xie Jingxing as her son. She pitied Xie Jingxing’s background. When Princess Yuqing passed away and Princess Rong Xin went to the Marquis of Lin’an’s mansion to pay her respects, she even shouted at Xie Ding for failing to protect Prince Yuqing. Although Xie Jingxing was mischievous, he treated Princess Rong Xin very respectfully. He would come to the princess mansion to visit her every New Year. However, he usually came only after the first day of the New Year, which was why Princess Rong Xin was surprised to see him during the Jade Rabbit Festival.

“I miss Auntie Rong, so I came over to visit you. Don’t tell me Auntie Rong doesn’t welcome me?” Xie Jingxing smiled. He was already outstanding in terms of looks, so when he spoke half-jokingly and half-seriously, the maids in the hall blushed.

Princess Rong Xin tapped his forehead and smiled. "You even dare to tease an old woman like me. You're getting bolder."

"Missing Auntie Rong is one thing, but I have something to ask of you tonight," he said.

Princess Rong Xin was stunned for a moment before sitting up straight and saying seriously, "Jingxing, are you in trouble? If there's anything you can't handle, just tell Auntie Rong."

"Auntie Rong, don't be nervous. It's just a small matter." Xie Jingxing smiled and explained, "I have a friend who got separated from her family at the Jade Rabbit Festival today and accidentally fell into the water. Although I saved her, it's a little inconvenient for me to send her home, so I want Aunt Rong to get your people to send her back."

Princess Rong Xin understood what he meant when she heard that. Although Ming Qi was relatively open-minded about the matters between men and women, they were still very sensitive to the reputation of a girl. However... Princess Rong Xin looked at Xie Jingxing. "Is your friend actually a girl?"

Xie Jingxing nodded.

"All these years, I've never seen a girl around you." Princess Rong Xin suddenly said teasingly, "Jingxing, you "'ve come of age now. I wonder how old that girl is. Is she married?"

"Auntie Rong." Xie Jingxing said helplessly, "She's still a little girl. Because I owe her a favor, I have no choice but to help. Auntie Rong, don't tell me you don't want to help me?"

"What are you talking about?" Princess Rong Xin pretended to be angry. "When have I refused to help you? Fine, fine, fine. Where is that girl now?"

"In the carriage outside. Auntie Rong, can you give her your spare clothes to change into?" Xie Jingxing said.

Hearing this, Princess Rong Xin looked at Xie Jingxing with a meaningful gaze. Seeing this, Xie Jingxing only shook his head helplessly and couldn't be bothered to explain. Princess Rong Xin instructed the maid beside her to help Shen Miao to the bedroom in the mansion to rest and said to Xie Jingxing, "But you haven't told me who she is."

"Shen Miao, the daughter of the mighty general," Xie Jingxing said lazily.

Princess Rong Xin was drinking tea. When she heard this, she almost choked on the tea. She looked at Xie Jingxing and said in disbelief, "Isn't that idiotic girl in love with the Prince Ding?"

Xie Jingxing shrugged. Princess Rong Xin looked at him seriously. "Jingxing, there are thousands of girls in the world. You're still young... You can wait."

Xie Jingxing was speechless.

On this side, Princess Rong Xin and Xie Jingxing were chatting. On the other side, Shen Miao sat in Princess Rong Xin's bedroom and watched as maids came and went to tidy her clothes and hair.

In her previous life, Princess Rong Xin did not treat her so warmly. Perhaps she looked down on Shen Miao, or perhaps she felt that Shen Miao was too eager to please Prince Ding, she always treated Shen

Miao coldly. Even when Shen Miao became the empress later, Princess Rong Xin was still indifferent to her. Princess Rong Xin didn't reside in the palace. Occasionally, when she entered the palace, she would show hostility towards Shen Miao, so in Shen Miao's heart, Princess Rong Xin was not easy to get along with.

Unexpectedly, she received such hospitality from Prince Rong Xin in this life, which puzzled her.

Chapter 283: Sudden Affinity (1)

Shen Miao sat in Princess Rong Xin's mansion for a while and changed her clothes. After drinking a cup of tea, Princess Rong Xin walked in.

"Miss Shen, are you feeling well?" Princess Rong Xin smiled and said, "I've already instructed the kitchen to get ginger tea. It's such a cold day. Warm your body and don't catch a cold."

Shen Miao smiled back. "Thank you, Your Highness." However, she was a little puzzled. Princess Rong Xin had never been so friendly to her. At this moment, she still looked the same, but there was no sternness or coldness on her face. It made Shen Miao wonder if the person in front of her was really Rong Xin.

While she was thinking, Princess Rong Xin was also sizing her up, looking thoughtful. Although Princess Rong Xin did not like to go out, she was still informed of all the rumors circulating in the capital. It was precisely because she did not often go out that the rumors she knew were all outdated.

In Princess Rong Xin's impression, Shen Miao was a timid and cowardly woman who was extremely bold when it came to pursuing men. She had no talent and no virtue, and she was born vulgar. How could she be worthy of Xie Jingxing, who was both good-looking and talented? However, at this moment, the girl sitting in front of her was pretty and delicate, and her eyes were as clear as water. Even when she was sitting, she had a noble and dignified aura that was rare in girls of her age. Prince Yu Rong couldn't help but change her opinion about Shen Miao.

"Tonight, Wanli Lake must be very crowded. Miss Shen, were you frightened that you got separated from your family?" Princess Rong Xin smiled and asked with concern, "After drinking the ginger tea, I'll get a servant to send you back." She looked like she was testing Shen Miao. "In order to help you, my stubborn nephew actually begged me for the very first time."

Shen Miao looked at Princess Rong Xin's meaningful expression and did not know how to respond. She paused for a moment before saying, "Young Marquis Xie is a chivalrous man. Sorry for disturbing you today." After saying that, she thought to herself, "Is Xie Jingxing a chivalrous man? He is clearly not. Today, if not because of him, I wouldn't get kidnapped. Why do I feel like I owe him a favor?"

Seeing that Shen Miao seemed to be deliberately trying to distance herself from Xie Jingxing, Princess Rong Xin was relieved. If Shen Miao pestered Xie Jingxing to be responsible to her because of what happened tonight, Princess Rong Xin would definitely look down on Shen Miao.

"Don't mention it." Princess Rong Xin smiled kindly. "Jingxing already said that you're his friend. Speaking of which, Jingxing is my nephew. Since you're friends with him, you can treat me as your auntie too."

Shen Miao held the teacup and almost choked on the tea. Treating Princess Rong Xin as her aunt? In her previous life, when she married Fu Xiuyi and Princess Rong Xin really became her aunt, she went to visit her, trying to fix their relationship. However, Princess Rong Xin said coldly, "Forget it, I don't have a niece like you."

The cold and distant Prince Yu Rong actually wanted Shen Miao to treat her as her aunt. Shen Miao felt that she was probably dreaming.

Seeing that Shen Miao was a little stunned, Princess Rong Xin felt that she was really an innocent child. She held Shen Miao's hand and said, "I don't have a child. Why don't you come to visit me often in the future?" She took off the bracelet on her wrist and put it on Shen Miao. "Take this as a gift from me."

Chapter 284: Sudden Affinity (2)

"This is too expensive." Shen Miao declined. This bracelet was made of jade. There were a total of five gold rings interlocked. It was passed down from the late empress dowager, Princess Rong Xin's mother. Later, when Princess Rong Xin got married, she gave the bracelet to her. In her previous life, Shen Miao saw Princess Rong Xin wearing this bracelet all the time. It was enough to show how precious it was.

"Just take it." Princess Rong Xin smiled and said, "It's just a small thing. I think your Shen family has everything you want. Don't mind this small gift."

"Of course I wouldn't mind the bracelet passed down from the empress dowager," Shen Miao said. "I just think it's still too valuable..."

Princess Rong Xin was stunned. "How do you know this is the empress dowager's bracelet?"

Shen Miao paused and thought to herself, "Oh no." Because she was the head of the palace harem in her previous life, she naturally knew this kind of thing. However, in this life, she was just a young girl, so she wasn't supposed to know about such a private matter.

Seeing Princess Rong Xin's suspicious gaze, Shen Miao had an idea and said with a smile. "I once heard Young Marquis Xie mention it. Young Marquis Xie is very close to you and often talks about you."

"I see." Princess Rong Xin's expression immediately softened. She said with relief, "I've treated him as my child all these years. It's good to know that he often talks about me." At this point, she looked at Shen Miao differently. "However, I didn't expect that he actually told you about this..."

Shen Miao froze. As expected, Princess Rong Xin continued, "It seems like he really treats you as a 'friend'." Princess Rong Xin sighed and said, "Although Jingxing looks a little mischievous, he's a good boy. All these years, I've never seen him so concerned about any girl." She smiled at Shen Miao and said, "You're the first."

Shen Miao thought to herself that Princess Rong Xin was really like Xie Jingxing's mother. However, Xie Jingxing got close to her not because of her beauty. Shen Miao was afraid that Xie Jingxing was also suspicious of her. It was really a headache for Shen Miao to deal with such a smart person.

At this moment, the maid brought over the ginger tea. As Princess Rong Xin chatted with Shen Miao, she watched her drink the ginger tea. The more she chatted with Shen Miao, the more Princess Rong Xin

liked her. She realized that not only did Shen Miao not look like the idiot she was rumored to be, but she was also knowledgeable and magnanimous. Although it was a simple chat, she did not feel bored at all. She did not know how a girl, who had been raised within the confines of a mansion, got such a broad view about so many things. Thinking of how Shen Miao pursued Prince Ding, Princess Rong Xin actually felt a trace of worry. Although Prince Ding was also her nephew, compared to Fu Xiuyi, Princess Rong Xin was naturally more biased towards Xie Jingxing. Princess Rong Xin did not want Xie Jingxing to miss out on such an outstanding girl, so she constantly put in a good word for him during the chat.

Princess Rong Xin was known to be cold and hard to get along with. Today, she actually had the patience to chat with an unfamiliar girl, which shocked the servants in the princess mansion.

However, she did not know that in Shen Miao's previous life, in order to please Fu Xiuyi's family members, Shen Miao had gone out of her way to ask around and knew quite a lot about Princess Rong Xin. However, in her previous life, she still didn't win Princess Yu Rong's trust. Now, because she had an additional relationship with Xie Jingxing, she was suddenly liked by Princess Rong Xin. If she had known that Princess Rong Xin was so easy to please, she would have tried to get to know Xie Jingxing in her previous life.

After chatting for a long while, Princess Rong Xin stood up reluctantly and said, "It's getting late. If I don't send you back, General Shen and Madam Shen will probably go crazy from anxiety. I've already gotten someone to prepare a carriage. I'll send you back now." With that, she stood up and instructed the servant.

Chapter 285: Sudden Affinity (3)

When Shen Miao went out with Princess Rong Xin, she was shocked by the scene. Princess Rong Xin's carriage was extremely gorgeous. What was even more shocking was that she had also summoned a group of armored guards. Princess Rong Xin smiled and said, "There are many people on the street today, so I get some guards to protect you just in case something bad happens again."

Shen Miao had no reason to refuse her kindness. Moreover, she could use this opportunity to use Princess Yu Rong's power to intimidate some people in the Shen family. She thanked Princess Rong Xin and got into the carriage.

On the streets of the capital, the crowd had not decreased, and the fireworks would be on for the entire night. On the busy streets, such a group of guards and a gorgeous carriage was too eye-catching.

On the city wall at the corner of the street, a young man in a fox fur coat was standing there, accompanied by a middle-aged burly man. The burly man said, "Her Highness actually sent so many guards to escort Miss Shen back to the mansion."

"Auntie Rong is not easy to please." The young man said with interest, "This Miss from the Shen family is quite capable."

The middle-aged man was silent. Suddenly, he heard the young man beside him say, "Did the people you caught tonight speak?"

“Master, they’re all locked up in the tower jail. Three of them have already committed suicide by drinking the poison. The remaining three have bitten their tongues out and refuse to say a word.”

“Then pick one and skin him alive. Don’t let go of an inch of his body. I don’t need to teach you how to do it, do I?”

“Yes.” The burly man hesitated for a moment. “How about those who sneaked into the city...”

“Find and kill them all.”

...

The capital was bustling with people, and under the superficial prosperity, unrest and danger surged.

In the main hall of the Shen family, everyone stood there solemnly. Shen Xin and his wife, who were standing in the middle, could not hide the anxiety on their faces, and Shen Qiu was even more vexed.

After searching for the entire night, they still could not find Shen Miao. Shen Xin and his wife were not fools. They knew that in this situation, Shen Miao was probably kidnapped. Who would take the risk to kidnap Shen Miao while the entire Shen family was just a few meters away? Ordinary kidnappers would not take such a huge risk. Most likely, it was a retaliation.

Shen Xin and his wife did not know about the details regarding Prince Yu’s death, but Shen Qiu knew very well. The destruction of Prince Yu’s mansion probably had something to do with Shen Miao. If the subordinates of Prince Yu wanted to avenge their master, it wasn’t hard to imagine what they would do to her.

Shen Xin even mobilized the Shen army and secretly informed the city guards to close the gate. As time passed, Shen Xin and the others were about to go crazy.

Chen Ruoqiu said gently, “Brother, Sister-in-law, we can’t just wait. Why don’t... we report it to the government? With the government interfering, it will be easier to find Fifth Miss.”

“That’s right.” Shen Wan also said, “Brother, the longer we wait, the more disadvantageous it will be for Fifth Miss. The Shen army has been searching outside. If others see it, they will be suspicious.”

Shen Yue stood behind Chen Ruoqiu and lowered her head to prevent others from seeing the corners of her curling lips. “Shen Miao deserved it,” she thought. The fact that Shen Miao was missing was probably the most pleasing thing she had heard today. She did not think about anything and only hoped that Shen Miao would be sent back after losing her virginity like Shen Qing. From then on, she would get all the limelight in the Shen family. Shen Miao’s reputation would be ruined and she would be unable to raise her head for the rest of her life!

“No.” Luo Xueyan frowned and glared at Chen Ruoqiu. “If we report it to the government, Jiaojiao’s reputation will be ruined!”

Chapter 286: Sudden Affinity (4)

Shen Xin and Shen Qiu searched for the entire night but to no avail. They could only get their subordinates to continue searching while they returned to the mansion to make plans.

“Sister-in-law.” Chen Ruoqiu looked sincere. “Is Jiaojiao’s reputation more important than her life? If she lost her life, I think you would live in regret for the rest of your life.”

“Chen Ruoqiu, who are you cursing!?” When Luo Xueyan heard that, she immediately shouted angrily. She was an impatient person and could not tolerate anyone saying anything bad about Shen Miao.

“What’s the point of arguing!” Old Madam Shen, who had been silent all this while, spoke. She glared at Luo Xueyan. “It’s you who lost Fifth Miss. Why are you taking it out on others?! Is Ruoqiu wrong? If we continue to wait, Fifth Miss might lose her life. What’s the point of caring about reputation if her life is at risk?”

On the surface, she did sound like she was concerned about Shen Miao, but Luo Xueyan felt uncomfortable and subconsciously wanted to refute.

“That’s right, Auntie.” Shen Yuan also added, “Even if we don’t report it to the government, I’m afraid people will figure out what happened from all the soldiers we sent out to search for Fifth Sister. At that time, it would make no difference.”

Shen Yuan had always regarded Shen Miao as a thorn in his side and wanted to get rid of her. Now that Shen Miao was in trouble before he needed to do it himself, how could he not add fuel to the fire?

Shen Gui was even happier. He said with a sad expression, “Sigh, why did something like this happen to Fifth Miss? Brother, do you have any enemies?” Who Shen Gui hated the most was Shen Xin. Shen Xin had outstanding achievements and was above him in everything in the imperial court. If anything happened to Shen Miao because of Shen Xin, Shen Xin would probably feel guilty for the rest of his life so that Shen Gui could kick him when he was down.

Concubine Wan pulled Shen Dongling to stand behind Shen Gui. She was the concubine, so she had no right to speak here. She listened to the others and did not say anything. She was glad that she kept Shen Dongling closely by her side and did not let her be kidnapped. Shen Dongling lowered her head, so her expression could not be seen.

“That’s enough. This matter will be made public sooner or later anyway. If we report it to the government now, we might be able to make Fifth Miss suffer less. Let’s report it to the government as soon as possible,” Old Madam Shen said, but a glint flashed across her eyes. What she hated the most was that the son of the old general’s first wife was always better than her son. Fortunately, Shen Miao was disappointed, which made her feel much better. Unexpectedly, at some point, Shen Miao started to outperform Shen Qing and Shen Yue. In addition, Shen Qiu was hanging around the mansion every day, making her feel annoyed. This time, Old Madam Shen was delighted to see Shen Miao in trouble. She couldn’t wait for all the people in Ming Qi to know that Shen Miao had been kidnapped. It would be best if she lost her virginity and made the first branch of the Shen family unable to raise their heads.

Before Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan could speak, Shen Qiu clenched his fists. He was young and impetuous, but that did not mean that he did not know how to read people’s expressions. On the surface, these people said that they were concerned about Shen Miao, but their eyes were flickering with a gloating

glint. No wonder Shen Miao had changed so much in a year, becoming mature and scheming. She was forced to be so by them.

Luo Xueyan and Shen Xin looked at each other, their eyes fierce. There might really be some misunderstanding about the fire in the ancestral hall. After all, they still couldn't find out what caused the fire. However, the attitude of the rest of the Shen family made Luo Xueyan angry and Shen Xin shocked and disappointed.

He treated them sincerely, respected them, and helped them. When his daughter was in trouble, all he could see was delight and gloating. Shen Xin suddenly felt that the happy and harmonious scenes that took place in the mansion in the past were so ironic.

Chapter 287: Sudden Affinity (5)

Shen Yue said worriedly, "What will those people do to Fifth Sister? She's good-looking. I heard that kidnappers will sell good-looking girls very far away... I'm afraid they won't let her off easy." As she spoke, two drops of tears flowed down her face, as if she was extremely sad.

A trace of mockery flashed across Chen Dongling's eyes, but she remained silent.

"Brother, are we going to report it to the government or not?" Shen Wan asked.

Just as the situation was in a deadlock, they suddenly heard the panting voice of a servant outside. "Madam, Master, Fifth Miss is back!"

The servant ran into the hall and continued, "Fifth Miss was sent back by someone from the princess mansion!"

Everyone was shocked by what the servant said about Shen Miao returning to the mansion. Shen Xin and his wife were pleasantly surprised, but when they heard the words "Princess Mansion", they were stunned for a moment. On the other hand, Shen Wan's heart skipped a beat. He took a step forward and asked, "Which princess?"

The servant caught his breath and said excitedly, "It's Princess Rong Xin. She sent many people to escort Fifth Miss back. The guards are all standing at the entrance!"

Princess Rong Xin?

Chen Ruoqiu stopped in her tracks and bit her lip.

Men weren't as familiar with Princess Rong Xin who never involved herself in the matters of the imperial court as women, especially the noblewomen in the capital. Now, the women in the palace all had to respect Princess Rong Xin, but it was extremely difficult to get close to her. She was serious and stubborn. Many noble ladies wanted to please her, but they were always given a cold shoulder. However, this princess, who was said to be the most stern and stubborn, actually sent people to escort Shen Miao back? From the looks of it, the escort team seemed to be huge.

Chen Ruoqiu was so jealous that she was about to go crazy.

Without a word, Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan ran out of the door and walked towards the entrance. Seeing this, the others followed. They saw a dark crowd at the entrance. When they got closer, they could see clearly that they were all armed guards in armor.

Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan were stunned. They were surprised to see so many guards. A woman walked to the carriage and helped Shen Miao down.

Luo Xueyan quickly went up to her and said worriedly, "Jiaojiao!" She sized up Shen Miao from head to toe. Seeing that Shen Miao was safe and sound, she heaved a sigh of relief.

The maid smiled and said, "Today, when Her Highness was enjoying the festival at Wanli Lake, she happened to see Fifth Miss Shen who was lost. The princess's carriage accidentally knocked down Fifth Miss Shen, so Princess brought Fifth Miss Shen back to the princess mansion to get treated. Princess asked me to apologize to you for making you worried."

That clearly explained why Shen Miao ended up with Princess Rong Xin. Although there was something fishy about the maid's words, since Princess Rong Xin had already said so, no one dared to question the validity of the story.

Behind the crowd, Old Madam Shen was so angry that her face turned ashen. Today, she finally waited for a chance to make Shen Miao suffer, but Princess Rong Xin came out of nowhere and ruined everything. Old Madam Shen hated Princess Rong Xin for being such a busybody.

"I should be the one thanking Her highness for saving my daughter," Shen Xin replied.

The maid bowed and said with a smile, "I've already brought Fifth Miss Shen back, so I'll leave first." With that, she dispersed the guards. Just as she was about to leave, she suddenly thought of something and walked to Shen Miao's side. "Her Highness likes Fifth Miss Shen very much. Before you left, she said that if Fifth Miss Shen has time in the future, please go to see her in the princess mansion. Her Highness will definitely treat you well." With that, she left.

Chapter 288: Sudden Affinity (6)

Princess Rong Xin liked Shen Miao very much and even asked Shen Miao to go to the princess mansion when she was free?

The Shen family was all standing at the entrance of the mansion, stunned by what the maid said at the end. Shen Yue almost tore the handkerchief in her hand. She naturally knew about Princess Rong Xin and how difficult it was to get close to this princess. Now that Shen Miao had used some kind of witchcraft to make Princess Rong Xin look at her in a different light, would she be able to get close to Prince Ding in the future with the princess's help?

Shen Yue was really anxious this time.

Shen Dongling's expression also changed drastically, and she heard Concubine Wan say with envy, "Fifth Miss is really lucky. She actually befriended a princess."

Shen Yuan snorted and turned to leave without looking at the door. Shen Miao smiled at the Shen family. "Sorry that I've made everyone worry today."

When Shen Miao said that, Shen Xin and his wife immediately remembered the faces of the people from the Shen family just now and their expressions turned ugly. Seeing that Shen Miao was fine, everyone from the Shen family was disappointed. When they saw Shen Miao, they were so angry that they felt suffocated. After Old Madam Shen reprimanded Shen Miao, they all found an excuse to leave.

Shen Miao followed Shen Qiu and the others to the west courtyard. When she saw the angry expressions on Shen Qiu and her parents' faces, she understood.

Previously, she deliberately delayed the people from the princess mansion from telling the Shen family about her whereabouts in advance. It was impossible for Shen Xin to change his mind about the Shen family overnight, just like how she had always had hope for Fu Xiuyi to change in her previous life. It would take some time for Shen Xin to completely change his opinion about the Shen family.

This was a good opportunity to let Shen Xin see what kind of wolves the Shen family were. While he was still in the capital, the Shen family couldn't wait to hit Shen Miao when she was in trouble. He wasn't so stupid as to not know what could've happened if he wasn't in the capital.

As expected, when they arrived at the west courtyard, Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan asked her about some things tonight. After confirming that she was fine, they instructed Shen Miao to rest early. The two of them left. Before they left, they called Shen Qiu out. It was obvious that they wanted to discuss something.

After the three of them left, Shen Miao rolled up her pants when no one was around. The wound on her calf was bandaged by a white cloth, and it seemed to still have the warmth of a certain someone's palm.

After the eventful night, she seemed to have understood Xie Jingxing better. However, the more she understood her opponent, the more she felt that it was dangerous. In the future... it was better to stay away from him.

...

In the east courtyard of the Shen family, Shen Yuan sat in his room, his expression dark.

After Ren Wanyun went crazy, he rarely visited her, and he was even more distant from Shen Gui. He was not a person who valued friendship and loyalty as he could even kill his own sister. In his mind, benefits outweighed everything.

Tonight, he thought that Shen Miao would not be able to escape unscathed. Unexpectedly, not only did she return unscathed, but she even befriended the princess. This made Shen Yuan feel a sense of danger, and his opponent was still getting stronger at a rapid speed.

In just a short period of time, Shen Miao had grown from a pushover to someone he didn't dare to underestimate. She was scheming and ruthless. How could someone as old-fashioned as Princess Rong Xin side with Shen Miao in the end? He couldn't help but wonder if Shen Miao would find someone stronger to back her up in the future and whether he would be her next target.

He felt shameful that he had to treat a little girl as his opponent. However, he had to admit that it was precisely this little girl who made the second branch almost collapse. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that he was next in line on Shen Miao's list.

However, Shen Miao was not difficult to deal with. What was difficult was that she still had Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan behind her. He had to be careful. However... Shen Yuan looked at the letter in his hand and suddenly smiled.

Although the first branch of the Shen family had a lot of military power, if they did not have a successor... they would be useless. He wondered if Shen Xin and his wife would go crazy from the pain like Ren Wanyun after losing their children.

Chapter 289: The Return of the Evil Sister-in-law (1)

On the New Year in the 69th year of Ming Qi, it snowed heavily all night. People were happy because it indicated that there would be a harvest next year.

However, to the General's Mansion in the capital, this was a special year.

The second branch of the Shen family had lost a daughter, and the madam had gone crazy. On the other hand, the most powerful first branch and the other two branches seemed to be at odds. They were not as close as before.

The Huang family, whose son was engaged to Shen Qing, had completely become enemies with the Shen family because of Shen Qing. Because Shen Xin and his wife were away from the capital all year round, they did not take their anger out on the first branch of the Shen family. As for the Wei family, whose son was engaged to Shen Miao, Luo Xueyan went to explain personally that it was just a misunderstanding. The Wei family was honest and did not make things difficult for her. In addition, Shen Xin promised to help Lord Wei more in the court in return, so the Wei family was naturally happy to accept it.

Therefore, to Shen Miao, this new year was quite good. She got rid of Fu Xiuyi, Prince Yu, Ren Wanyun, and Shen Qing, and some things were still changing slowly.

However, while she was happy, some people were not.

In Rongjing Hall, Old Madam Shen was sitting in her seat while Shen Yuanbai was crawling around her. She looked annoyed, a resentful expression appearing on her shriveled face.

"The first branch is continuously challenging my patience. This year, they didn't hand in a single cent. The boxes of treasures given by the emperor are all locked in their courtyards! What exactly do they want? Do they still have regard for me?"

Old Madam Shen was angry at the mention of this. In the past, Shen Xin would send the treasure from the emperor to her every year. Because the couple was usually not in the capital, other than leaving some gadgets for Shen Miao, they wanted nothing. Old Madam Shen had pocketed a lot over the years. Now that something happened between Shen Xin and the Shen family, Shen Xin stopped giving her a scent. In Old Madam Shen's eyes, his behavior was reprehensible.

"Old Madam, don't be angry. Perhaps after a few days, when First Master is appeased, he will send the things over." Mrs. Zhang comforted her. "I think First Master was still unhappy with what happened to Fifth Miss."

“What happened to Fifth Miss?” Old Madam Shen said angrily, “All these years, I’ve been taking care of her and raising her. Are they still not satisfied? I think he just doesn’t want to acknowledge me as his mother! What an ingrate! And that Luo Xueyan, I think it’s her who’s been teaching Shen Miao all these nasty tricks.”

Seeing that Old Madam Shen was furious, Mrs. Zhang was silent for a moment before saying, “Fifth Miss has indeed grown up and become more scheming. However, Fifth Miss has lived with you since she was young and has always been very obedient to you. I think she still respects you and sees you as her grandmother. Old Madam, why don’t you summon Fifth Miss one day and say something nice to her? She’s just a young lady and will definitely be easy to coax. Fifth Miss is the apple in First Master and Madam’s eyes. If you can control Fifth Miss, won’t you be able to control the first branch?”

Mrs. Zhang was also quite scheming. When it came to being the madam of such a large family, Old Madam Shen was not capable at all. All these years, if not for Mrs. Zhang’s giving her ideas, she would have made a fool of herself.

Old Madam Shen sneered. “Coaxing her? Every time I see that girl, I think of that b*tch. Now, I still have to coax her and please her? I feel disgusted just by looking at that face.”

Chapter 290: The Return of the Evil Sister-in-law (2)

Mrs. Zhang was a little helpless. She wanted to persuade her again when the maid at the door said, “Second Young Master, you’re here.”

Shen Yuan strode in.

“Yuan.” Seeing Shen Yuan enter, Old Madam Shen’s attitude softened a lot. When Shen Yuanbai saw him, he smiled at his second brother.

Shen Yuan did not reach out to hug Shen Yuanbai. He only smiled and said, “I’m here to see Grandmother.”

“You don’t have to come. I know you are busy lately.” Although Old Madam Shen said so, she still revealed a happy smile. Among these grandsons, she loved Shen Yuan the most. Shen Yuan was young and had just become an official. Everyone praised him, which made her proud. Naturally, Old Madam Shen valued him the most.

“I was lucky enough to get a bottle of Jade Snow Cream and specially brought it to you. Grandma, please don’t decline.”

Shen Yuan smiled and handed the bottle to Old Madam Shen.

Old Madam Shen was a little surprised, but then she pretended to be angry. “I’m already so old. What’s the use of these cosmetics for me? Are you deliberately trying to tease me?” However, she held the bottle tightly like it was a rare treasure.

Old Madam Shen used to be a singer after all, so even if she was old, she didn’t stop putting cosmetics on her. Shen Yuan’s thoughtfulness immediately wiped away Old Madam Shen’s gloomy mood.

"Grandmother is young. Only someone as noble as you deserve such a rare thing," Shen Yuan flattered without batting an eye. The two of them chatted for a while. Shen Yuan was a smart person. Old Madam Shen liked him to begin with and even more so when she heard the sweet nothings. The atmosphere in Rongjing Hall was extremely harmonious. Even Shen Yuanbai, who was on the couch, was ignored.

After talking for a while, Shen Yuan suddenly thought of something and said casually, "Speaking of which, Grandmother, Cousins are coming in a few days, right?"

Old Madam Shen paused for a moment before saying coldly, "They'll leave after staying for a few days." Before Old Madam Shen became a singer, she had a family. Perhaps it was her family who sold her to a brothel. Old Madam Shen's ancestral home was in Suzhou. Later, Old Madam Shen was brought to the capital by Old General Shen to be his concubine, so she cut off all contact with her family. However, this year, her family found out about Old Madam Shen's whereabouts from somewhere and asked their grandchildren to go to the capital. They said that they were here to see Old Madam Shen, but in fact, everyone knew that they were just here to take advantage of her.

After being separated from her family for so long, Old Madam Shen naturally wasn't so enthusiastic about them coming to see her. Hearing Shen Yuan mention this, she was unwilling to talk more about it.

Shen Yuan smiled and said, "I've never seen my cousins before. They're probably about the same age as Fifth Sister." He sighed. "Speaking of which, when Eldest Brother returned to the capital this time, I heard that Eldest Uncle and Aunt are choosing a girl for him. They're probably concerned about his marriage."

"They are choosing a wife for Shen Qiu?" Old Madam Shen immediately sat up straight. "Yuan, do you know if they have decided on anyone yet?"

"I don't know." Shen Yuan thought for a moment and said, "However, with Eldest Uncle and Eldest Aunt's influence and status, they will naturally find a wife from an equally powerful family for Eldest Brother. I think in the coming future, Eldest Brother will be very successful."

The more Shen Yuan said that, the uglier Old Madam Shen's expression became. After a while, she said sourly, "That depends on whether the girl likes him or not!"

Shen Yuan pretended not to know and said casually, "But the most important thing is that Eldest Brother likes the girl. If Eldest Brother likes the girl, it doesn't matter if she's not from a rich family or the. Perhaps, Eldest Brother will fall in love with our cousin. Isn't that great if that happens?"